HOME JAMES

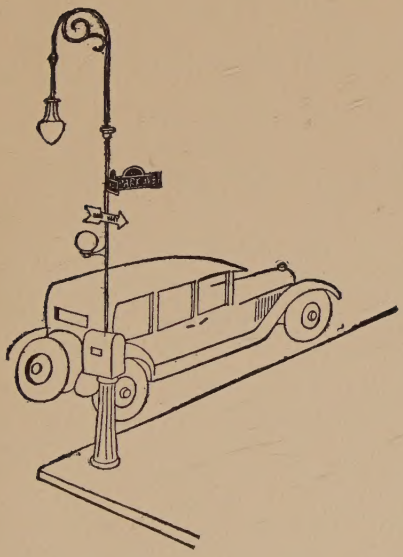
by ETHEL KELLEY

WITH

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

RALPH BARTON

HOME, JAMES



OTHER BOOKS BY

MISS KELLEY

BEAUTY AND MARY BLAIR

HEART'S BLOOD

WINGS

It was the Park for her and stop the car in the same place, and her snuggling half over into my seat

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By

ETHEL KELLEY

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FOR

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AND

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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I

WELL, I done it. And she's got only herself to blame. They think they can make a monkey out of you, with their soft tricks and innocent eyes. Innocent eyes with the winkers strung with brown wax every once in so often. Well, I showed her!—

I told her how pa would expect us to get the car in before twelve. I gave her to understand that I proposed to drive straight up the Avenue. But not for Baby! It was the Park for her, and stop the car in the same place, and her snuggling half over into my seat. Well, I guess she knows now that a man's made of flesh and blood, whether he's her pa's chauffeur or any other kind of a he-man. She-men cake scrapers are mostly what she's come into contact with. But she knows now.

"Miss Rich," I said, "your pa wants this car by nine o'clock in the morning. I got to take it pretty near apart before then."

"And you'll have enough left over to build another car out of little pieces. You're so clever, Jimmie!" she purred, brushing a streak of powder into my uniform.

"Sure, I am!" I said, looking as dirty as I could.

"Don't you like it here, Jimmie?" She done some writing on my sleeve with her little finger.

"I could die of it," I says.

"Are you cold?" She lays her thumb and forefinger on my hand that I intended to keep the glove on and forgot it.

"I'm always cold," I says, hoping she'd get the point without any explaining.

"Is that why you are shivering?" she says, with her nerve right with her.

"I hate to be mauled," I says, giving her as good as she sends, and trying to disgust her with my being so vulgar.

"Do you, Jimmie?" she says, in the soft voice.

"Sure!"

"Look at me, Jimmie."

I puts my foot on the starter.

"I've seen you before," I says.

"Look now." She grabbed me and I looked.

"God!" I says. And I didn't make no excuse for swearing, either.

"I thought perhaps I'd marry Reginald Sawyer—he asked me to yesterday," she says later.

"You'll marry me," I says. And she's got to, too.

She could make hair grow on a hard-boiled egg, that girl. Carol Rich—she'll carol rich all right, and then Mrs. Jimmie Jakes will sing a different tune: I'm the world's damnedest fool all right, but I'll learn her she can't start anything she can't finish. A man that's a man can only control himself up to a certain point. That's her first lesson.

My idea is that marriage is natural. You show a girl a good time that you wouldn't let on even to your own mother, and then when it's over you don't remember what color her eyes were. Then all of a sudden a glib little girl gives you a look, and you know you've either got to pay your fine or go to jail.

I didn't want to get married till I had looked around and found a girl that was my ideal. One that had been learned by her mother how

to make a man comfortable without recourse to the delicatessen all the time. One that realized that a day-bed was for use nights and ought to have its sofa pillows put back on the first thing in the morning. One, I mean to say, that made a man's home and surroundings look refined. A blonde girl that sort of dazzled your eyes when you looked at her too quick. I always kind of thought of her as that little girl in the picture, "September Morn." Grown up, of course, and with a négligy on, and a breakfast cap.

Well, I suppose we all got to find out that marriage hasn't got much to do with ideals. I'm used to having the women of the men I drive a car for, practising on me in one way or another. I try not to forget that my mother was a woman, and to treat women with respect—until their behaviour calls for contempt. Which it generally does, about the third week after I take a job. But what are you going to do when you can't get away with it?

Carol, she kind of made a bet with herself that she'd make me like the taste of orange lipstick, and believe me, she won! If a girl makes up her mind to make you want to marry her,

and you do, the time comes when you either got to get her out of a scrape or get into it yourself, or both. You can't unscramble an egg, can you? Carol done dead wrong in going after me, but she went after me and she got me. She meant what she done and I meant what I done, and, that being the case, we had ought to abide by it.—

Carol, she made all the arrangements. We went to Cartier's and got the rings, and then we went to City Hall and had them put on ourselves, she saying: "I do," before the Justice was more than half-way through the ceremony.

"Miss Rich," I says, when we got back into the taxi—she wanted to take her pa's car, but I put my foot down—"I hope I'm going to be able to make you happy."

But she put her arms around my neck and kept me kissing her. She isn't nothing much more than a child. The sweat broke out on my forehead and wet my hair when she let go of me long enough to stick her head out of the window and pretend to say to the driver:

"Home, James."

What was I doing, I says to myself, taking

that painted, brown baby home to where I lived, in the Model Tenements, where she'd stumble over the garbage pail and the ash can, every time she went into the front door?

But I done it, all righty!

2

ONCE upon a time there was a little Christmas Carol, about knee-high to a grasshopper's thimble, and what dumb thing did she do but to go and fall twice in rapid succession, once for the Prince of Wales, and once for James Valentino Jakes.

She was a poor little Rich girl, that always got everything she wanted; so she even got to meet the Prince. She was so far gone she had already bitten through his photograph in an ecstasy of affection, after a hip-hip-hurray party given by a girl friend. But the Prince wasn't unattainable enough to suit her requirements. He was so warm and fraternal that he left her cold. So little Carol started huntin' again, and cast her eye on little Jimmie Jakes, also a quaint boy in a uniform. There she stuck.

The trouble with little Carol was a pretty serious trouble. She was thrill-proof. She was a nice, human little girl, that wanted to do her

thrilling while the thrilling was good, but she just couldn't make the grade among the clams and cauliflowers of the stag brigade. From little Willie Wilkins and his impediment to big Bobby Burnett with his adenoids—there was no game to play, because the grounds were all wet. She was through before she began, in spite of her hankering and her hungering. Besides, what she liked to do was to hand it out, rather than shovel it in. Givin' was more blessed than receivin' for little Carol. That is, she liked to do a little worshipping herself instead of sitting in the niche with her hands folded palm upwards.

So, like the man that prayed for rain and got Noah's Flood repeated on him, little Carol got a sight of Jimmie Jakes, standing in front of her father's car—Jimmie Jakes—the new chauffeur. Thrills—she got an earthquake!

"Jimmie," she said, climbing quickly into the front seat, "you are what I meant to say when I stopped talking." Out loud she merely remarked: "Where did you come from, Baby dear?"

And he said, the darling dumb-bell:

"Your pa sent me."

"But Pa's no picker," I said—for it was indeed I, and no other.

"Just lucky?" said Jimmie, looking me over—not such a dumb-bell, after all.—

. . . . . .

So that's how it all began, my dears, and the end, which is not yet, was consummated in City Hall by a dear old egg in a beard—Rabbi MacCarthy, or Saint Joseph's Jewish rose, who frantically bit the rings before assigning them to us. I said: "I will," long before he got around to asking it of me, so to be sure Jimmie would last out till the end of the ceremony—or for some other obscure reason. It's hard to analyse the motives of a crazy woman—and I'm crazy, as the Almighty Father of all the nuts must know by this time. I must learn to curb my sacrilegious tongue when Jimmie is around, I'm discovering. He doesn't understand thumbing your nose on your knees, or prayers in slang. But I couldn't believe in a God I couldn't say, "Who's looney now?" to.—

So, this being late afternoon of my excuse-it wedding-day, I am sitting on a balcony on the top of the world, overlooking the East River, which gets my vote in the beauty contest, and looking back through the elergant French windows of my private sweet. There is a large kitchen—about as big as a dress closet—a smaller living-room, from which the day-bed and the Mawruss chair have to be ejected when me and Jimmie go in—a bedroom—who's afraid?—with a beautiful old antique brass bed in it—and, shall we say, the nursery, containing a secretary, two Windsor Chairs, and Jimmie's books—sectional bookcases in fumed oak. I never saw any fumed oak, but I recognized this at once on account of the way it was fuming.

Jimmie has gone out to buy the wedding supper and I'm supposed to set the table. I never set a table in my life, but several more waters have got to flow under the bridge before I'll admit it! To my hus-hus-hus-help-help-husband! I'm also supposed to compose a telegram to my widowed father, telling him he has lost a chauffeur and gained a son. He's gonna be so pleased that he'll have a cyst on the *medulla,* as

we pathologists say—or rain in the brain—the phrase known to the proletariat.—

What makes people marry each other? Love—and what in the name of all that's preposterous is love? Deep calling to deep—the Atlantic yelling to the Pacific, as the poet puts it. "I want my mate," says the tigress, walking up and down her gilded cage, with an Irish accent. And so they were married.

All I know is that this is mine, and nothing else ever has been—or might ever be. I'm young, but I'm talking. If I'd had a mother, instead of an expatriated henna madonna, I should have consulted it about the cosmic urge, and What a Young Wife Ought To Know, and one thing and another. Or if Father was human. As it was, I just asked the man at the Wilkins garage if he didn't think James was a swell chauffeur, and he said:

"White, clean to the gills."

So I said our last driver was a crook, and he said that Jimmie wouldn't even take a manufacturer's rake-off, unless he had something to do with selling the car, and he never double crossed a pal.

"Or a girl friend?" I said, doing my best *in loco parentis* to the bride to be, and feeling rottener than I had ever felt in my life.

"I never knew him to be sold on no girl," he said, "but if he was, he'd treat her the way she deserved. A man ain't white about men and yellow about women."

"Isn't he? I thought he was sometimes," I said.

"Well, Jakes ain't," he said; "he's a gentleman."—

So here I sit in a gown made by the Callot girls, water-waved by Antoine (the Ritz is the only place where they make a boyish bob look like a girlish halo), waiting for the ham sandwich and *sauerkraut* that is to consecrate the end of a perfect wedding-day. Soon I'll be pledging my groom (no joke intended—I'd have married him if he'd been a bus boy) in sparkling ginger-ale. I hope he gets Canada Dry, but, like Jurgen, I'll taste any drink once, even if it isn't imported. Jimmie's palate is about as educated as that of an enterprising goat that has had no advantages. Well, I'll learn him. Incidentally, as he says, he'll learn me.

So here I sit in the Mawruss chair in a gown made by the Callot girls waiting for the ham sandwich and sauerkraut

And so God—if there is a God—and I haven't heard different to-day—take care of your chile.

I hear footsteps approaching. He is coming, my own, my sweet, be it ever so airy a tread. I think I shall say good-bye to that one little boat, touched by the sun—like me—all quivering and rosy in the twilight. It doesn't know where it's going, but it's on its way. Perfectly shameless, I call it.

3

WELL, you could of knocked me over with a feather when I see how she took the whole business. I mean coming home with me and all. I went through with it for two reasons—to keep her out of mischief and to help her out of the mischief she was in.

Say what you want to, when you get involved with a girl and a girl gets involved with you—it's a scrape. I don't mean to say anything in any way off colour; I mean that human nature is human nature, and there's something you can't explain that handcuffs a woman to a man and a man to a woman, and to go against it is dead wrong—after you've heard the click.—So that's why I married her—you might say with my best judgment matched against my better judgment.

The whole thing was hurried up more than I meant it to be. If I'd of been told that I'd of married Carol while I was still working for her pa, I'd of fixed the one that told me, to look like

a omelet made of bad eggs—but what happened was this. Whitten was preparing to slip right into my place before the new car come. I had a right to my commission on it, especial if I had a wife to support, and—here was the point—Whitten's a yellow grafter. Charges up twice the gas and all the other tricks. He wasn't going to get a job with my wife's father if I could cramp him in any way. But you can see the position I was in.

I said to Carol: "I can't do it." But it come to the point where I would have hurt her feelings too much. Carol is sensitive the way a little kid is sensitive. They climb all over you and get the candy out of your pockets and then they cry for fear you really don't want 'em to have it. Carol gets it in her mouth, as you might say, and then chokes on it. She could choke herself to death if you didn't say the right word at the right time. It took me a while to find out how delicate her feelings was.—

That first night for instance—she was a brick, trying to help me out by slicing the bread and boiling the water, and not letting me know that boiling water was more work than she had ever

been learned to do, to say nothing of using the dull edge of the knife and cutting the finger that had the ring on it. Annie Flaherty had cleaned up the house for me and I thought it looked pretty good till Carol come into it. Then I begun to see. Her pa wouldn't have had a Morris chair; and day-beds, I guess, is kind of going out.

"You can fix up the place with curtains," I says. And all she says was,

"Jimmie! Jimmie! Jimmie! Jimmie! Jimmie! Jimmie!"—

So we had our supper, and the boats went by on the river, and I sat with my arm around her, and then I took her in my lap and she went to sleep. You can see how tired she was. The moon come up like a little, silver boat itself and we set under the stars, Carol breathing regular and sweet like a baby or a little, soft animal—a kitten.

And I thought of my mother and of what a man is. Not fit for a woman, and yet the only thing to stand between her and a lot worse things. What I meant to say is that a woman could naturally go to pieces quicker, just

through ignorance and nervousness. Women, they don't care what they do until they are doing it, and then they blame everybody in sight. Men do wrong or they do right and blame themselves according—when it comes to it.

The sweat broke out on me once or twice sitting there with Carol asleep in my arms. Thinking about getting married is one thing, but doing so, even for the best of reasons, is a gamble, no matter how you look at it. I tried to think if I had ever had a friend that was better off for it and I could only think of Tom Healy, and he looks ten years older than his age from worrying about Molly and the children, though she's his life and more. Then I tried to think of any of them that was better off for being alone and I couldn't.

I thought of Carol's pa and what I had done to him—but he would have let her marry any one of them shrimps that wasn't earning more money than I was and couldn't have kept her quiet for half an hour after they got her. I've seen 'em and I've heard 'em—she doesn't know I have, but I have.

I do her the justice to say that, after we met,

she turned the cold damper on their petting attempts, but I ain't a fool. I could see how far they had got before they couldn't get any farther. It doesn't mean much to these little kids nowadays, but how do they get so wise about what thrills is or isn't?—Not reading about them in books! I guess the back seat of any family car could give you an earful of dope on that subject, even if the chauffeur wouldn't, and I don't make no exception of Mr. Rich's.—

Well, I set there first thinking of Carol as if she was a little, brown monkey that I hadn't nothing to do with—funny how your mind handles things so cool sometimes—and then more and more as if she—well, not her exactly, but my feelings about her—was something I couldn't bear the beauty of.

"My wife," I says; "my wife?"

"Who are you talking to?" she says, waking up.

"God!" I says.

"You said that once before in a moment of considerable emotion!" she says.

"This time I'm answering you a question," I says.

"Well, stop talking to God and talk to me," she says.

And I done so.—

4

IT was the fourth day out on the Sea of Matrimony that I went to call on Father.

All I succeeded in telegraphing the night I was married was that I was spending a few days with a friend. Well, as it happened, I was. So I turned up at lunch.

"Say, Dad," I said, "if you lost Jimmie Jakes, would you take up with Whitten?"—

"Probably, but I don't expect to lose Jimmie Jakes."—

"I've got the low-down on Whitten," I said; "he'd charge you twice as much gas as you used."

"I'd better keep Jakes."

"If you can," I said.

"Isn't he satisfied?"

"He's the most satisfied chauffeur you ever had," I said.

"Did he say so?"

"Sure!"

"Well then—if those are stewed kidneys, Sarah, take them away and bring me a herb omelet— If there isn't any salt butter in the house, don't serve me any—"

"I've been away for three days, Dad."

"Enjoy yourself? This isn't coffee; it's dish-water."

"These are not biscuits; these are digestion dodgers."

If I was going to do as much complaining as Father, I'd wise-crack now and then, to vary the monotony, but he didn't take the cue.

"Pink pepper!" he was exploding. "Why the hell——"

"Dad," I interrupted, "I can give you something worth cussing for."

"Never knew you when you couldn't."—

"Speaking of cars," I said, "do you want to give me the old Cad for a wedding present?"

"Are you thinking of getting married?" He continued to scrape the paprika off his potato, regardless of the fact that it is the only make-up that ever improved a baked spud.—

"I was," I said, "and so I did. And as I was telling you, you've either got to fire Jimmie or

raise his salary. I charged his wedding-ring to you at Cartier's. Jimmie bought mine."—

Oh, well, it was a beautiful scene. For five paragraphs he didn't understand. For two pages he was threatened with cerebral hæmorrhage. For half a chapter he threw me out. Finally I secured for Jimmie the car, a third interest in the Wilkins garage, and an invitation to dinner. After which I signed off, till I began broadcasting a new program from station L. O. V. E. Though as a matter of fact, when I got back to the scene of my nuptials, a quaint thing was occurring there.

A green-eyed creature, with a neck like a giraffe's that had been added on to a couple of inches, was sitting in my drawing-room, trying to draw my darling Jimmie out.

"When a Blonde Makes Up Her Mind to Do You Good" was the name of the selection she was rendering. As I blew in on the breeze that had wafted me up the seven flights of outside stairs that makes my honeymoon lair accessible only to eagles and airplanes, she was trying to figure out some way to leave a long, ash-coloured hair

Oh, well, it was a beautiful scene. For five paragraphs he didn't understand. For two pages he was threatened with cerebral hæmorrhage

on an unsuspecting, blue serge shoulder without divine intervention.

"Meet Miss Jones," says Jimmie, as I enter.

"Angelica," says the vision—to Jimmie, mind you! Then she rose, with a so-this-is-the-little-bride expression, to which she added well-I-don't-think-much-of-her, and her left eye, which was slightly loose, focused itself to regard me.

"I * hope * we * are * going * to * be * very * good * friends," she said, finishing off every word and tying it up with a little bow knot, to register education. "I * have * known * Mr. Jakes * for * a * long * time."

"Favourably, I trust?"

"We are neighbours."

"I had the impression that Jimmie and I were alone in the world," I said.

"I want to be friends with James's wife," said Angelica.

"Jimmie's friends are my friends, if you know what I mean," I said.

"Oh, I do!" said Angelica.

"I'll bet you've cooked him many a meal of

Southern-style sweet potatoes and hashish," I said.

"Hashish isn't somethin' to eat," said Jimmie; "Angelica could cook it if it was. She's as good a cook as I ever knew a girl."—

"Praise from Sir Hubert," I said; "Jimmie can fry an egg sandwich to make your hair curl." The only way to make Angelica's hair curl would be to put her in a kiln and go off and leave her.

"My hair——" said Angelica, leaving the rest to our imaginations—with all I know of dear old Freud, and his little group of serious slinkers!

"Angelica's hair comes way to her knees," Jimmie said; "I've seen her drying it on the balcony."

"It or them?"—but I thought better of it. I'm sure they are nubbly. And I try to be charitable to such of my sisters who couldn't roll their stockings even if they wanted to. No intelligent Nordic ought to club a female moron to death. They should be fought with their own weapons—cat poison!—

After Angelica had discovered she wasn't going to get so much as a grapenut offered her,

she remembered she was going out to dinner. To a little Russian place, where they had Russian food and Russian music, for a great surprise. As the door closed on her, I made the supreme effort of my life—which was, not to tell Jimmie that she was something the cat brought in on his off day. The effort cramped my style of imparting the news I was busting with.

"Darling Hubby," I said, breaking rule one, which is not to kid his English, "Father's buying you a third of a garage, giving you the old Cad, and asking you to dinner. Which doesn't mean that he doesn't hope you'll choke."

"I wish you had let me go to him."

"So he could have told you that you were the yellowest proposition he'd ever seen?" I was trying to put it in a refined way.

"Yes," said Jimmie.

"Dad's got a better vocabulary than I thought he had," I said, "but he had a lot of difficulty with it."

"He thinks I'm a yellow dog, don't he?"

"Oh, all of that!"

"Well, I ain't going to set down to no dinner with him till I've had it out, man to man."—

"Oh, yes, you are, Jimmie," I said.

"Yes, I ain't!"

"Well, we'll see," I said.

"And so we will," said Jimmie.

But he's going to do just as I tell him, and the sooner he knows that, the better for him. I didn't marry him to have him handle things any way he happened to want to. I married him to handle him the way I wanted to. Doing what he was told was the way he got the job. And I shall remind him of it, too.

5

THE first rift, as you say, within the lute, come after we had been married four days, when Carol she went to see her pa and fixed things up according to her own ideas on the subject, and Carol's ideas wasn't mine.

When she decided she was going to marry me whether or no, I was in a kind of a helpless situation; I liked her all right and I wanted to act the gentleman—to her, to her pa, and to everybody concerned, but she overrode all my objections and put me in a peculiar position. I mean to say that when a girl wants to get married right away, there is only one thing that's going to save a man—and that is his not wanting to! As I look at it, a man's got two sides to his nature. He could be engaged for years and be just as sincere about the way he felt, if she didn't have certain cute little ways. If she's got those ways, the strain is considerably greater. There never was a girl that had cuter ways than Carol.

But having got married in this underhand fashion, the next thing to do was to inform Mr. Rich, and I thought this had been done, Carol having assured me she had phoned a telegram to him that first evening. And so she did, but she didn't say anything about being married to me in it.

Of course, I was kind of on the anxious seat, those first four days, when no calls come in for the car excepting for me to go and get old Miss Rich and her grand-niece and take them to the Bronx one day. Mr. Rich, he don't use the car in the spring much to go to business. So I couldn't figure out what kind of a attitude he was taking. Carol, she could have saved me a good deal of distress of mind if she had told me just how things was.

Then, to cap the climax, she goes to lunch with her pa, and without a word to me about what she intends to do, and tells him she's married to me and he can do what he damn pleases about it and so on. Just as if I had put this marriage over to better myself and get favours out of him, which was far from the case.

I had spent considerable time figuring on what

"Meet Miss Jones," says Jimmie, as I enter

I should say to him man to man, and how I should let him know that I should protect his daughter the way a man protects a woman that has confided her life to him.

"In memory of my mother, Mr. Rich," I was going to say, "I will cherish and provide for your daughter to the best of my ability."—

I put myself in his place and I thought of the only things that would have set my mind at rest in a like situation. But Carol, she had to put in her oar and stir up the waters, which was roiled enough anyway.

In the first place I made the deal to trade in the old car and I got the best terms for Mr. Rich that I could. I know how to handle dealers and I was proud in particular of the way I had come out this time. By Carol getting her pa to give us the old car, she had thrown the whole transaction out and besides thrust a white elephant on my hands, for getting the old Cad fixed up, would run into money—money that I ain't hardly got, if I'm going to keep a thousand in the bank, like a young married couple ought to have, to say nothing of insurance. Why, car insurance alone is four hundred a year. But you

can't show a woman figures. She either starts to cry or to hum something.

As for the Wilkins garage, it's a good, paying proposition, but I've never had no desire to have my name connected with it. The truth is I couldn't be responsible for the way they do business. I wouldn't be part owner in a garage where they have good engines overhauled and rebuilt with reference to the owners's pocketbook, instead of to what ails the car.

The way I feel about a car is this—it's got a right to honest handling, just the way a human being has. A good car is a good sport and will do its best for you, even to accomplishing miracles, you might say, with its heart bursting and its breath short, taking the hills and dropping you into the hollows, to get you to some place on time, or, without your having nothing to do with it at the wheel, saving some feller's life in the rush of traffic. I've seen things and I know things about cars that prove they're human, and I wouldn't run a garage that didn't take that into account. There's things that counts more than money in this world, and you

can't put your heart and your soul in a business that hasn't got no integrity.

But I wouldn't know how to begin to explain this to Carol. Women haven't got much principles, in a business way. They don't understand why a game where everybody cheats isn't just as fair as one where nobody does. They don't want explanations to explain—they want things put in a favourable light or nothing said.

But turning down the Wilkins garage didn't make me any more popular with Carol than if I done it out of cussedness. She took the grounds that I done it to hurt her feelings and her pa's feelings.

I did explain to her that to go to dinner with her pa, either in a dress suit or without, would be pretty awkward. I've eat so many meals in the kitchen with Annie and Bessie that it would be embarrassing all around for me to suddenly step out and eat with the family, forcing myself in where nobody but Carol wanted me, and the kitchen buzzing with it.

Besides, there are a few points of etiquette I

want to get on to. I've eat enough with Mr. Rich to know that his table manners is about the same as mine are, except that there is some things that he knows better than, and I do the best I know. I eat my soup now the same as Carol does, but if I was having dinner with her pa, I ought to get up every time she stands up, without regard to what her pa does. Now, I'm just about up to copying her pa, but not to varying it any, and his manners is nothing to model yourself on.

So Carol cried herself to sleep all alone in the day-bed the first part of the night, and then she cried herself to sleep all over again when I picked her up and carried her into our bedroom. Which I didn't do until she gave me a couple o' black and blue marks by beating me with her fists. After which she was rational enough, except the last words she spoke.

"I'm glad it's raining," she said, "because cats hate the wet so," which didn't make no sense to me.

We hadn't been talking about nothing but the Russian restaurant that Angelica Jones goes to eat at. Carol wanted to know where it was lo-

cated and I told her. Later she had a nightmare, and woke up clutching me.

"I dreamed I was organizing a movement for the extermination of ash blondes," she said, "and there was one that I couldn't get out of the closet. Then when I got her by the hair, it came off. She was a wolf in sheep's clothing. You like blondes, don't you? But I just perfectly hate them."

"I don't know," I said. "The only blonde I know is Angelica."

"She's a gentlewoman in reduced circumstances, isn't she?" Carol said sleepily.

"That's just what she is," I said.

But Carol was still sore about the Wilkins garage and insisted on going out to the day-bed again, all I could do. And this time I couldn't coax her or haul her out of it.

6

IT'S my anniversary. Married two weeks and forty-five minutes and already the gangrene of disillusionment has set in. Who does Jimmie Jakes think he is, anyway?

I should have been a happier *frau* to the Prince of Wales, I'm thinking. His Royal Cuteness hasn't got the skylight ideals and the jaw of brick that makes the present incumbent so exasperating. When you marry bread and cheese and kisses, you ought at least to get the kisses. Has Jimmie tried to kiss me in the last thirteen hours? He has not. I should have brained him if he had, but does he know that?

And all because I've been trying to learn him a few simple things, like how to treat the boss's daughter and how a young couple can live on an income that's less visible than the king's clothes, which he wasn't wearing at the time—and what price day-beds, if any!

We've certainly had a swell time, with the ex-

ception of the episode of Angelica, and my premature divulgement of the garage plan. By the simple expedient of not letting the albino in when she rang, and allowing Pa to go ahead with Wilkins unbeknownest to my boy friend, I procured quite a little peace in the establishment. I hung gingham curtains everywhere, even around the sacred niche of the garbage can, and I bought some Italian china and one thing and another that made a veritable bower of bliss out of Baby's little bird's nest. And the honeymoon has distilled its precious syrup for me and my sweetie.

I didn't know I wanted so much to be married, but I did—I did—I did, and to somebody precious. There isn't anybody preciouser than my Jimmie. I hope that's perfectly clear, even when I kick and scream and scratch his eyes out. I must discipline my old man, even when it hurts him worse than it does me, or pretty soon he'll be running the whole coop.

Our idyll began to back-fire yesterday, when I thought I'd try to dope out a way of getting a little ready blood out of the stone of Father's heart. Living in the slums on the sweat of

Jimmie's brow is all my fond fancy described it in advance—and then add the plus sign. It doesn't take many necessities to make me happy, but I can't do without my luxuries.

I've got to have my rag imported, my bone chiropractised and my hank of hair done by an expert. Why shouldn't I have the style to which I've been accustomed and Jimmie into the bargain? Pa's good for it. It costs a lot of the fathers in his set money to get their daughters respectably married, but all he has to do now is to go on supporting me and giving Jimmie an occasional honorarium.—Soft—when you think I might have brought him a sick count or a phony, desiccated duke. I would have married any leper, capable of making me feel the call, and done most of the wooing myself, too. So he ought to be only too thankful.

I tried to tell Jimmie that, handled right, the world was our oyster, and Pa the be-you-tiful soup that surrounded it.

To which he replied: "He asked me if I were going to bring you to dinner this week."

"And what did you say?"

"I said, 'No, sir.'"

"That's your idea of a diplomatic relation with your only in-law? Just not going to dinner with him?"

"Just about," said Jimmie. "What you don't eat can't choke you."

"It can't keep you from starving, either. Not that I haven't gained three and three-eights pounds in the last ten days and a half——" I added hastily. "It's having cream and honey for breakfast and reading the Volstead Act backwards every night before dinner."—

"A woman can't take much liquor," said Jimmie; "that is, not a young woman that might at any time be in the situation of——"

Well, there he had the grace to blush.

Not that we've gone into the subject, but it's got to be broken to Jimmie that the fashion of having quarruplets went out with the horse-car. He'll probably hold out for triplets, but I shall tell him that while a part owner of the Wilkins garage might afford to have half or three-quarters of a twin, it would be different with a mere chauffeur in the Rich family, who underpay their drivers as a matter of principle.

At present Jimmie and I couldn't afford to have anything larger than a juvenile in a flea circus, and then we'd have to depend largely on the salary it brought home. I can see Jimmie's ideal of a rose-embowered cot in the great, wide open spaces of the Bronx, far from the East Side ash-blonde district—where there ain't no ten commandments and a man can raise chickens. But not at less than ten thousand a year. And I don't care where it comes from, so long as it comes from Dad.

But women cannot live on bread and cheeses alone. Jimmie is a fiend not to make me kiss him, whether I want to or not. I've done everything I can to make life uncomfortable for him—even to—well—I certainly don't understand the psychology of men.

After we had quarrelled about Father awhile, we went out in the car, which had been parked in front of our teeming tenement, pending the issue of our argument, and from the running-board of which we had to dispossess an Irish family and three young Wops before we could start it.

I sat in the back seat, oblivious to the fact

that I had a husband in the world (for I had given him the thirteen minutes till we got into the Park to come across with an humble and a contrite heart, and he hadn't come), when I suddenly saw Ackey—(Aiken B. Aiken)—ambling amiably zooward.

"Hello, Ackey!" I said, signalling Jimmie to stop. "Going to throw a monkey-wrench into the monkey works?"

"Why, Carol, ole baby," he said, "where have you kept yourself? Lemme in." And he opened the door and joined the conjugal group.

Do me the justice that I hadn't the slightest idea he didn't know. It had been in all the papers, crowded off the front page by a bath-tub murder and the Frenzied Fluctuation of the Franc, but still conspicuously flamboyant. The tabloids all published pictures of Marion Talley in a wedding veil, leaning on the arm of the head waiter at the Algonquin—and referred to Father as the multi-millionaire. I thought of course Ackey had all the clippings in his wallet.

"You certainly are a sight for astigmatism," he said. "Gimme a kiss."

"Don't be rough." I indicated Jimmie.

"He's used to it, ain't he?"

"Yes," I said, "he is." I only thought that was funny.

"I'd go without a drink to kiss you."

"Oh, Ackey," I said, "have you got a flask?"

"Am I dressed in my clothes?"

I drained the life-saving liquid.—

"For Pete's sake, change your bootlegger," I said; "my throat is all raw."

"Nemmeru mind—bring back your humanity. Les' smoke and kiss behind the smoke screen."

I saw Jimmie's ears go tomato-coloured.

"Stop philandering with an old married woman," I said.

"I will, when you are."—

"See," I said, showing my Cartier.

"The third that's shown me one of those in s'many days. Where do you little virgins get 'em?"

"My husband."

"Who d'ye marry?"

I pointed. Ackey was convulsed.

"I married too. Married the cook. Col-

oured but kind. Don't squirm so. Somebody'll see you."—

Jimmie brought the car to a standstill and so missed the sounds like a popping cork that Ackey bestowed mostly on the air. Then the driver behind us began cursing, and I pushed Ackey out and shut the door.

"I don't blame ye," said the other chauffeur to Jimmie, after they'd come to an understanding, "They'd be drunk and disorderly if they wasn't society."—He stuck a thumb in the direction of me and the vacuum recently vacated by Ackey.

"Sure," said Jimmie.

I should have been quite alarmed about the whole effect on Jimmie if he hadn't winked solemnly at me as he said it. He's had me and Ackey on the back seat before, and I guess he realized it was all a mistake that I wasn't quick enough on the trigger to correct. 'T any rate, he wasn't any madder or less mad when we got home than he was before we started out. But that was mad enough to ruin my life—and it's still ruined, by gum!

Damn—damn—darn him.—

7

WELL, I been a fool.

When a man spends all his waking hours congratulating himself that nothing has been put over on him, he's in a dangerous situation. There's a mole tunnelling through his earthworks somewhere.

I been working on the theory that a man's wife was his wife, and his principles was his principles, and kidding myself into believing that I could impress the first with the second, just because I was responsible for them both.

Of course I wouldn't admit it, but I've been afraid of Carol; so I've kept pounding the idea into myself that I was just as good as she was, in spite of her position in society. I've been afraid to look Jimmie Jakes in the eye for fear he'd cringe and start whimpering about how he'd married above him. So I've just let the poor jackass hang himself on his own halter. I've kept up my courage like a drunk insisting

that he ain't boiled, and if he is, he has a perfect right to be.

What I mean to say is that I'm a cur and Carol's a thorough-bred. Bred so fine she don't always know to keep her little nose out of the filth. Or there's another way of putting it. I married a princess without realizing the amount of dirt there is in court politics.

I been trying to drag her down to my level on earth, which ain't right, even if the ledge she is sitting on is smeared with bird droppings. She's in a higher place than I am, even if it ain't so wholesome in many ways. Which may be a crazy way to figure it, but it's the nearest I can get.

Then I been kind of sorry for myself because I had to marry one of these calcimined, canooddling cuddlers, instead of a responsible helpmate that could cook and take some of the burden off a man's shoulders—somebody like Angelica Jones, for instance—highbrow and delicate minded, but not one that has moved in fast society. I caught my car, you see, and was kind of dissatisfied with its being a Pullman instead of a day coach. Well, I got to stop pre-

tending that my champagne is beer and don't cost no more by the bottle. In other words, I got to handle Carol different.

My mother used to say to me that right was right, and wrong was wrong. Mother was a good woman and I wanted she should think so, and I never let on to her that I thought there could be any two ways about it. But what I figured out pretty early was that right was right as long as you thought so. I mean that, if I would see different about the Wilkins garage, I could give in to Carol, but the catch is that I can't see different. My rules is my rules until I can change them—like the rules of government; for instance, I got myself in a hole when I said I wouldn't drink nothing but pre-war stuff, and that's a fact. Carol, she thinks it's because I approve of the Eighteenth Amendment.

The reason I've had to do so much figuring out things these last few days is that Carol has been kind of setting a price on herself. If I ain't willing to sacrifice my manhood to knuckling down to her pa, she takes to the day-bed. She ain't going to love no man that won't get

her the money to get her hair bobbed at the Ritz, no matter how he has to demean himself to procure it. She knows by this time what's cruel and what ain't cruel to do to a man, and she just don't use her common sense.

Well, I'm not one of those who intrudes himself where he isn't wanted. Not for no reason. I've stood a good many different kinds of strain in my time.

Yesterday there was about five minutes when I come pretty near committing a murder. I never understood before how a man could get into a state of wanting to kill another man for making love to his wife. I used to think that your wife ought to be above reproach—or you wouldn't care what she done. I've had that Aiken fellow on the back seat with Carol before she made up her mind to go after me, and I've had him there with friends of Carol's, that she was sending him home with in the car. So I know what he's liable to do or say.

When he climbed in the car with Carol, I was kind of laughing in my sleeve at the whole situation. And when I realized he didn't know she was married, I was prepared for everything,

except the way I felt. I was all for stopping the car and squashing him as you would a cockroach—fizzing sounds and all.

I guess I should have done so if I could have got my hands on him in time—and Carol, she would of got just what she wanted—me crazy with love, and willing to do anything or say anything to please her. Well, I let on that I got considerable amusement out of the whole affair and we resumed our poker playing about where we had left it off in the morning.

I guess a man's house is his castle, providing he ain't been locked outside of it. That's what happened to me. When the time comes that I can get hold of Carol and trust myself to give her the spanking she deserves, she's going to get it good and plentiful.

Mr. Rich, he wanted the car late this afternoon and I was glad enough to respond to his message, after putting in several hours of not speaking unless I was spoken to, and not being spoken to in order to prove how unreasonable I was.

I was kind of worried about what Carol would

have for supper. I meant to have broiled her a steak, and some fixings, and got her some ice cream with strawberries crushed into it. As a matter of fact, I did get the ice cream and stood there beating on the door with one hand, while the pink juice oozed out of the pasteboard I held with the other.

I didn't have no key, because I let her have mine when she lost hers. I told her to leave it at Angelica's if she went out, but Angelica wasn't in and no note for me on the door, so I knew Carol was home all right. Besides, you kind of feel your wife—the bond is so close. You know whether she's behind the door or not. The flesh on your bones tells you. Well, I called and I knocked and I pounded, till it began to dawn on me. I was going to be made to suffer for my sins.

The next time I tried Angelica's door—three flights below us—she was there. I told her Carol was gone off and took the key and might be going to stay away all night.

"Then you stay here, Jimmie," said Angelica; "I'm going to my sister's for the night, and you can, just as well as not."

"Thank you," I says, "but I'll probably only sit around for a while to see if Carol doesn't come home. Don't let me keep you," I says.

But she made me some sandwiches and coffee and a good deal of conversation that I didn't hardly listen to, my mind was so full of other things.

"Can you make yourself comfortable on that kitchen couch?" she says; "I don't hardly——" She looked toward her own bedroom.

"I wouldn't think of going in there," I says. "I expect Carol will be back, but if she isn't, I may try to get in by the fire-escape from the next flat."—

She buzzed around me for a while, the way women do, but when she see I had something on my mind that worried me too much to talk about, she started off for her sister's, coming back the customary ten times to say things that didn't need saying. Women never know when they're well off, as Carol says.

Well, I tried at different times to get into the flat, but Carol, she wouldn't let me in. The window on the fire-escape was locked; so I laid

on Angelica's kitchen couch all night, after all. I can't say I slept there.

I could see Carol in my mind's eye, in her peach-coloured pajama suit, with all that lace on the sleeves and trousers—making up for the night, with the little gold jars of things set out on the bureau—her middle finger stained down to the knuckles with cigarettes, and her hair springing up around her face from where she'd brushed it down so straight. I could see her just as plain as if I was in there in the room with her —poor baby!

8

IT'S easy enough to manage a husband, if you have the nerve and an iron constitution. Nerve is what I haven't got anything else but, though I fear my constitution may crack under the strain.

The night I locked Jimmie out, I cried all night. Then I set the door on the jar and went to sleep, waking around the witching hour of noon, to find myself in Jimmie's arms. It was an accident—I'll say that for him—he didn't mean to, but when he saw how the cruel ravages of the psychic drama had undermined my pallid beauty, he couldn't help himself.

So little Carol scored that time. Realizing which, she proceeded to have plain and fancy hysterics all over the blue shirt-front so opportunely offered, reeking as it did of pipe-smoke and gas and good, clean, Pears's soap Jimmie.

"I was going to spank you," Jimmie said, after the roof had begun to settle down quietly about our shoulders.

"Why didn't you?"

"You are too little," Jimmie said. "It ain't fair to spank real young babies."

"When I grow up, you can spank me."

"When you grow up, I'll have to."

"Well, all I want is for you to love me." I managed to produce a slight left-over sob.

"No, it ain't," said Jimmie.

"What isn't?"

"All you want to for me to do just exactly what you want me to."

"Same thing."—

"No, it ain't," said Jimmie; "it's a different thing entirely."

He didn't offer any explanation as to where he spent the night and I didn't ask him. I'm hoping it will develop in conversation that he sat on the fire-escape and that he bears the imprint of the iron bars somewhere upon his anatomy. I'm a sadist or something. I like to inflict pain upon my Jimmie and watch him wriggle, though I must say that, even in the recesses of the most intimate modern psychology, it's the woman that pays and pays. Jimmie may get a little scar on the tissue of his subconscious-

ness, but what is that in comparison to the nights of anguish I spend gazing into the speaking features of my latest complex. The Neurosis sisters always get me, going and coming. I get an *idée fixe* about my *idée fixes* every time. One to fetch and one to carry.

The next incident in my maritial maelstrom was the incident of the Reboux hat.

Jimmie brought around the new car—the old one having been turned in, according to the original plan (drat and blast my father's pugnacious chauffeur, a man of whom I have the lowest, most contemptuous opinion)—and he went driving for my health, slowly up and down Fifty-seventh Street, where every prospect pleases and the fan may see the style. (Quite poor, but Jimmie laughed.)

At the well-known establishment in the middle of the block, which shall be nameless (namely, Bendel's), there was a hat sitting by itself on a child's-size stand—a little, varicoloured hat, made of the breasts of young rainbows, dipped in dawn-rise over the Mediterranean. It was *my* hat, and nobody with a soul in their bosoms could deny it. I should have been born in it,

or at least married in it, and I shall regret to my dying day the fortuitous accident that prevented my at least doing the latter—the accident of my not knowing that such a hat existed.

I dragged Jimmie in to see it on me, and ordered it charged to Father at once. At first I thought I'd wear it out, and then I decided to take it home and practise a few of the more solemn rites of make-up before I ventured forth in it. I wanted the first effect to be perfect.

"Shall I give it to your chauffeur?" asked Miss Dorine—an old pal of mine.

"How much did you say the price was?" said Jimmie.

"Eighty-five dollars."—Dorine looked as if the kitchen stove had followed me in, and was addressing her.

"She don't want it," said Jimmie. "Come on, Carol."

"But I do want it," I said.

"It becomes Madame perfectly." Dorine had noticed the Cartier.

"It's too costly," said Jimmie. "No hat ain't worth that much."

"You look here, Jimmie Jakes," I said; "that

hat is worth anything. He's my husband as well as my driver," I said to Dorine; "so I have to be patient with him. You tell him."—

"It might take Madame years to find another hat so perfectly suited to her." Those girls are used to all kinds of combinations, from chickens with their Butter-and-Eggs, to old ladies in the flower of their dotage, with boy friends on a leash.

"It's beyond the reach of my pocket-book." Jimmie tried to get me by the arm.

"It's just what Father needs," I said, "to wake him up to his responsibilities. I won't leave the shop without it."

"Very well," said Jimmie. He took a roll of bills out of his pockets. "I'll pay for it."—

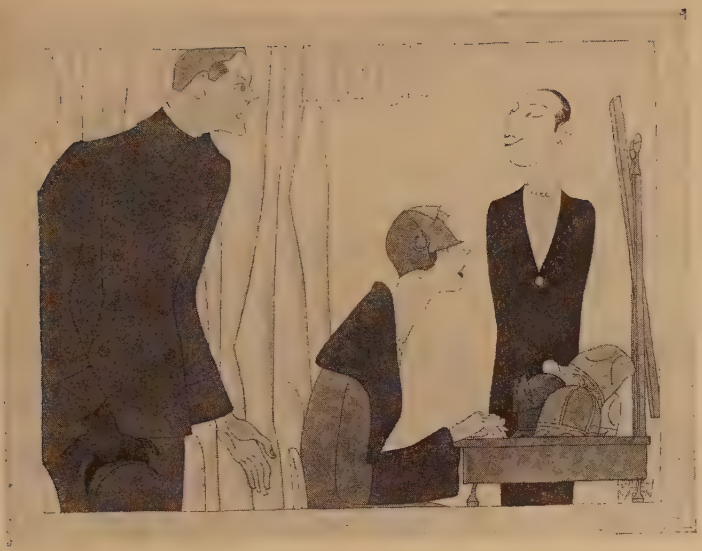
"Don't take it, Miss Dorine," I said.

But Dorine took it. There was that in Jimmie's eye——

"That was two weeks' salary," I said later, when I felt able to resume the subject.

"Part of the rake-off on the new Cad. Here." He thrust the rest of the roll in my lap.

"Don't be silly," I said, sticking it into his pocket; "I'm furious at you for taking money



"It's too costly," said Jimmie. "No hat ain't worth that much"

we need to buy sausage with, just to prove the general disagreeableness of your disposition. You've spoiled all my pleasure in the hat now."

"Was you going to take pleasure in it, after what it took out of me?"

"What did it take out of you?"—

"Look here, Carol. It ain't in proportion that you should buy eighty-five-dollar hats, and at the same time live with me in what surroundings I can afford. It's making too light of me. A man wants to support his wife with his own efforts. It hurts his self-respect if she ain't serious about it all."

"But, darling," I said, "you don't suppose I could possibly think of living on what you make. It wouldn't keep me in ear-rings. You like me the way I am, and I wouldn't *be* the way I am without my hectic tastes in un—wearing apparel. You wouldn't like me if I didn't express myself in my clothes. I'd be just a little, brown inhibition, that you'd forget to love."

Which reminded me of something.

"Love me now, Jimmie," I said; "hold me tight—tight—tight."

And he held me, the poor darling, telling only

the top of my water-wave what poor sports he thought all women were, and me most particular.

"Marriage is just a joke to you," he said.

"Well, don't let it be a bad joke, then."—And all at once I shivered, as if somebody was walking over my grave. Maybe it was just the big, communal grave of matrimony.

9

I'VE come to the conclusion that it's education that counts in this world, and by education I don't mean studying—I mean being brought up so's you know.

The way I look at it is this. You can be in pretty close relationship with what Carol calls culture, just the way I am with the people I work for, without having it affect you none. That is, you got to be part and parcel of things like etiquette and grammar and good taste, or they don't do you no good.

I had a good, plain home in the country when I was a boy, and my ma, she was a school-teacher before she was married, but she never used any different kind of language than Pa did. What she taught in school, she put on and off, like the clothes she wore on Sundays. It hadn't nothing to do with her or with her offspring.

Now, these men in Carol's set—though sometimes it seems like insulting the name of man-

hood to call them that—they have the advantage over me in one thing. They was brought up in families that used their education week-days. Then when they went into society, they was, in the language of the poet, masters of their fates and captains of their souls in any situation.

Carol, now, she just thinks it's funny that I ain't a college Percy, but I can see that, as time goes on, she might get to feel my lack. If I am able to invent a new kind of truck transmission and get out a patent on it, she won't realize that it's a thing to respect or not to respect. Women, they are capable of seeing where things get you or what you get for them, but they pass right over the things themselves. Just doing something for the sake of the mechanical part of it is beyond them. Even Tom Healy's wife, who thinks the sun rises and sets in him, don't take much account of the fact that he could give Edison points on his own inventions. All she knows is that he ain't never done so. Sometimes I wonder how men ever get as far as they do with women expecting results so quick from everything they undertake, when anything

that's worth anything takes so much time and patience.

So I'm just about as far as a puzzle with Carol. I want she should have a husband she can be proud of, but how I can furnish her with money enough to keep her contented and get anything accomplished in the way of improving myself and furthering our future is more than I can see. Married life is uncertain at the best. I don't seem to see Carol in my mind's eye as the mother of offspring, but I wouldn't let on to her that such is the case, for fear of hurting her pride. I don't suppose that any woman would care to think that a little stranger wouldn't be more than welcome; so I always act as if I should welcome the unexpected at any moment.

Well, we entertained some of Carol's friends here last night. There was no reason why they shouldn't come. The newspaper accounts of our marriage gave our address, of course, and any friends of my wife's is welcome in any home I provide for her, but when all was told, it was kind of embarrassing, though she and I done our best to make everyone comfortable.

Well, there was Reginald Sawyer and his sister and Aiken Aiken, and Peter and Polly—two girls that have come back from abroad and Carol always speaks of together, just as if they hadn't no rightful existence separate from each other; and a knock-kneed little man that they seemed to be using to hang things on and to carry bundles for them. Plummy, they called him.

Carol had just put on her light-coloured négligy, trimmed with pink cat, as she says, and I had lit my pipe and settled back in the Morris chair to read for the three minutes I have to myself before the cat-fur needs to be stroked and the little, troubling heart beneath it has to be put through a quieting process. Carol's heart beats so hard sometimes that I'm afraid it will come clean through its wrappings, right out into my hand.

Neither of us wanted to be disturbed, but after the knocking on the door had continued long enough, we got weak-minded and opened it.

There was a line of them, stretching downstairs, with Aiken Aiken at the top. He come forward and put out his hand to shake hands.

There was a line of them, stretching downstairs, with Aiken Aiken at the top

Then he thought better of it—no special reflection on me, I guess.

"Fancy seeing you here," he said, to carry off the situation.

"This is where I live," I said; "my wife will be pleased to see you."

"For the love of Woolworth," said Carol, "look at the delegation calling on the bride!"

"Can we come in?" said Peter and Polly and Plummy (Wait-for-Baby, as Carol calls him).

"I guess you can," said Carol; "I wouldn't like to bet on it."

She kissed Mary Sawyer without saying nothing to her and shook hands with Reggie, but all she did to Aiken Aiken was to stick out her tongue and hiss at him, which flattered him considerable. Personally, I can't imagine nothing much worse than to be the kind of human Carol would stick out her tongue at; so my craze for killing cockroaches didn't bother me none. I was willing to let Aiken Aiken live, but I did kind of turn my attention to the Sawyer couple. At one time Carol thought she might get married to Reginald Sawyer, I think it was the way he responded to her right away that discouraged

her. Anyway, she claimed he was a wash-out, and I guess that, whatever she meant by that, he was. But my head don't work very well in circumstances where I am took at a disadvantage. I certainly didn't want Carol kissing his sister and shaking hands with him. I'd rather it would have been the other way, knowing Carol.

"What a perfectly priceless place," says Peter and Polly—Peter being about my height and Polly undersized compared to Carol.

"Priceless," chimes Wait-for-Baby.

"It is priceless," said Carol with her chin up. "Come out on my balcony and look at my river."

"My God!" said Aiken Aiken, meaning it, I guess, as the East River bursts upon him.

"Mine!" said Carol. "It's quite a night scene, isn't it? You people on Park Avenue haven't got anything at all to look at."—A little fussed she was; I could see it.

"Park Avenue isn't what it was," said Reginald.

"Has it moved somewhere?" Carol asked him.

"Yes, it has."

"Where to?"

"Avenue A and the river, I believe." He come out on the balcony and stood beside her, quite a good-looking young fellow with his hat on. His head ain't a good shape when he shows it all.

"Do you miss it, p'raps?"

"N. O. Y. G. D. B., Mrs. Jakes."

While I was pondering on what that meant, the sister edged up, and Carol put her arm about her.

"I'm glad to see my friends," said Carol, "though I had no idea in the world that I would be. I've been living in my own little Il Paradiso."

"But I suppose you have to come up for air sometimes," Polly said—Peter and Plummy opening and shutting their mouths only.

"I have to come down to earth sometimes," said Carol.

They all piled into the sitting-room and got out their liquor, and we got out the ginger-ale for them to put it in. The girls smoked red-tipped cigarettes; so you couldn't tell where the lip-stick left off.

"You fellows can smoke your pipes if you

want to," I said. "Carol, she smokes hers in the parlour," which wasn't a joke either.

They didn't hardly know how to take me, nor me them. I tried for Carol's sake to make them feel at home, but they was all so occupied with telling themselves that it was the last word in pricelessness—Carol marrying her pa's chauffeur —and trying to keep their faces straight, that the atmosphere got more and more unnatural. I was relieved when Angelica come in. I knew she would rise to the occasion and she did, wonderful.

"Meet Miss Jones," I said; "Miss Angelica Jones."—

"Shake hands with Angelica," Aiken Aiken said. But Angelica give him one of her smiles, and Carol give him a dirty look; so he decided to be good.

Carol, she surprised me. You'd of thought Angelica was the best female friend she had. She not only put her in a favourable light every time she could, but I even see her put her arm around her once, real affectionate.

By the time they went, she had them all piling into Angelica's place to see how cute she had got

it fixed up, and I heard her tell the Sawyer girl to see how pretty Angelica's hair was, and what a crime it would have been to bob it, which was a thing I was entirely unprepared for.

"Angelica had the time of her life, didn't she?" said Carol, while we was cleaning up the place afterwards.

"She can handle any situation she is called upon to fill, thanks to her bringing up," I said. "Some folks hasn't the advantage of all the little niceties of life in their early surroundings. Sometimes for your sake, Carol, I wish my early life had had more refining influences."

"My lamb!" said Carol, absent-mindedly tilting up a flask that somebody had left and licking her lips after it.

"Carol," I said, "what does N. O. Y. G. D. B. mean?"

"None of your God-damn business—why?" said Carol.

10

MY sanctuary has been invaded. I'm no longer the beamish bride, ensconced behind her barricade of burnt bridges. I'm the Woman Who Entertains. At home Thursday evenings to slumming parties from Park Avenue and Fridays to social investigators from Avenue A. My friends are bad enough, but Jimmie's are worse, for they are interested in my morals instead of my morale; and while I am capable of upholding the latter against all comers, I have so few of the former—tacit and explicit, as it were—that I can't get up much of a case for them.

Ackey decided he would pay me out for his *mauvais* quarter of an hour in my car. He didn't mind my snubbing him so much as he hated his ignorance of the juicy scandal. Ackey gets simply mortified at not being on the inside of the know. It seems to him just too humiliating for words to have the commandments

broken on some other part of the grounds of what he considers his show. So he wasn't satisfied till he'd played guide to a private excursion to the Jakes establishment. He'll be happy for a month, embellishing the anecdote for various audiences.

"Meet Miss Angelica Jones"—"There's a difference in the way sardines is packed"—the poor fool won't recognize that as a pretty good joke about our living room—"Carol, she smokes her pipe in the parlor."—And he'll leave out the way that Jimmie put him in place two or three times when he got too fresh for any social strata. Also he will fail to report the real respect with which Reggie faced his successful rival.

As to Peter and Polly and Plummy and Reggie's pale, moonlit pool of a sister, they are all the kind of people that you have to keep your eye fixed on to remember that they are in the room, though I suppose their tongues are hung in the middle, and made of the best quality of sounding brass.

Who would ever have thought that poor little old Carol would mind what anybody thought of her East River ærie, and the soul-mate of an

eagle that had taken her in his beak and brought her there? (Ironic description.) I guess she's getting sensitive in her old age. My Jimmie is worth ten thousand of them. They're all as ephemeral as the celebrated snowball in hell, and Jimmie is a good, solid asbestos ball that I can sit on and swing my feet, till the end of nothing.

I had a funny reaction to Angelica when I saw her among that little, intimate crowd of scavengers—a kind of sister feeling. I would have protected her with my life if it had been necessary. As it was, I put my arm around the creature twice. She was a social success before the evening was over.

To do her justice (and I can't condone the passion for Jimmie which amounts almost to monomania, though I suppose you can't blame a cat for the way it acts in the room with a canary) she's got a lot more character than some of these sewer walkers in my own set. Her refinement may be painful, but she understands what she's doing most of the time and goes ahead and does it. She supports a thrice widowed mother, and her slogan is something else than slime for slime's sake. She not only appreciates Jimmie,

but she has the guts to worship him. Of course I hate her like poison and I hope she chokes, but just the same I shan't have her torn limb from limb under my roof-tree. At least that's the way I feel now. We Carolinians are subject to change without notice.

The next evening we had the same beautiful dream of domestic bliss. This time I was wearing the pants—a blue, Chinese suit that makes me look like Little Boy Blue just before the angel-song cue—and I'd put some vine-leaves in Jimmie's hair and tied a blue sash around his waist, to make him look more peculiarly mine. I always had to put the personal touch on my dolls before I could play with them.

Unfortunately the door was on the latch—my habit of losing keys faster than we can get them made necessitates more or less manipulation of the lock—so our guests came on in—informally, you see. Tom Healy had brought his wife, and her sister, and her sister's boy friend, and also his mother-in-law, to make it harder.

Tom Healy is older than my Jimmie, but the same kind. Blond, good-looking, and with brains enough to be president of the United

States, if it took any. But they caught him young and married him to a red-head, with patient, blue eyes and a taste for the best in art and literature. Tom thinks she is a cross between Elizabeth Barrett Browning—that great brow, and the spirit-small hand propping it, which is a terrible picture—and one of the more personable of his saints.

I didn't mind her so much, but the sister was gun-shy, and a very poor carbon of Park Avenue preferred. Their mutual mother was the kind of woman who couldn't yet understand the garden of Eden story, if it was told to her in words of one syllable. She'd just claim that a good little girl like Eve couldn't possibly——

All I had time to do was to stick my little pipe into Jimmie's mouth; so he was smoking two when they entered—and to flee, giving everyone the best possible revelation of the Far Eastern situation as I transmitted. When I returned, conventionally gowned in a frock that covered my throat, but not my knees, and a face resplendent with protective coloring, I found the weather rather inclement.

"Meet the two Mrs. Healys and Miss Healy

and Mr. Healy and Mr. Einstein," said Jimmie; "my Wife." The hands all had the general feeling of having mitts on—even Mr. Einstein's.

"I've heard about your Theory," I said to him, thus making a social error. You mustn't make a crack at another lady's boy friend. Mr. Einstein was, of course, a pure-blooded Arabian.

"Was you surprised at the news?" Jimmie asked happily of nobody in particular. They didn't all speak at once, but finally old Mrs. Healy obliged.

"I was surprised," she said, "when I knew it wasn't any girl we had ever heard you speak of, Jimmie."

"Why, Jimmie, didn't you ever speak of your boss's daughter, before she was your boss?" I said.

"Does she boss you, Jakes?" But Tom's women frowned him down. This was serious.

"She tries to," said Jimmie. "Won't any of you folks lay off your wraps? Did you ask them to, Carol?"

Thus prompted, I tried to pry them out of a coat or two, but they wouldn't part with so much as a hand-bag.

"How about some ginger-ale?" I said, but apparently not. Ginger-ale was just one of those things you didn't mention. I tried gin.

"All my family are teetotallers," said Mrs. Healy.

"Tea-totallers—that's good," Tom said, but nobody laughed.

I asked Mrs. Tom if she had seen Eddie Guest's last book, and then I burst forth into conversation of all kinds, shooting everywhere with lavish carelessness, trying to hit something, it didn't matter what. But all that happened was that the Healy girl (with skirts as short as mine and less reason for them, and little clusters of curls at the side of her hat, that I wouldn't be found dead wearing) continued to disapprove of me more and more. I gathered that she felt that she was respectable and I wasn't, because she was going steady with Mr. Einstein while I had inveigled Jimmie into a disreputable mess of matrimony. The vine-leaves in Jimmie's hair and the mikado's pants had conveyed entirely the wrong impression.—Decadent she would have called it if she'd known what it meant, and

everything I said or did just confirmed her opinion.—

"You mark my words, it won't last," said Mother Healy on the stairs, erroneously supposing they had shut the door behind them. "She's just fast. Don't you say so, Susie?"

"Just one of those high-flyers. And she isn't even pretty," Susie agreed.

But what Mr. Einstein said I didn't catch. Perhaps he was already figuring out another dimension and couldn't concentrate.

Well, he was a good husband while he lasted, but he gave out on me.

I thought he was waterproof and air-tight and guaranteed for life, but it's the easiest thing in the world to be mistaken. There is no God. I'm going home to Father and get one of these snappy divorces that his lawyers can get me; then I'll marry Reggie, thus committing suicide by boredom.

It may seem unreasonable of me, but I don't want to live any longer. I want to die and go where my mother would have gone if she'd been

any good. Maybe some man double crossed her before Dad came along, and she never behaved herself again, or let her hair get back to its natural colour. Maybe I'll never behave myself again. I don't see why I should. I took all the courage I had, and married my man, and gave life a chance, but it just turned rotten in my hands. Well, let it rot, I say. I'm through.

It began with a quarrel about the Wilkins affair. I told Jimmie he was partner in a paying business, whether he liked it or not. That Father had made the arrangements and signed all the things that ought to be signed, and that all that was required of him was to kiss the hand that had dealt the blow, and all would be well. I explained to him that I was his fairy godmother, bearing gifts, and Dad was the slave of the lamp, and all we had to do was to rub him the right way, and open our mouth and shut our eyes.

Well, Jimmie was not pleased. It seems that he doesn't approve of Wilkins. He'll do business with him but not for him. That is, he'll hire garage space for Father and buy his gas there, but he won't be party to selling it.

"I can protect your pa's interest when I'm on the outside," he said, "but I couldn't if I owned in."

"I'd admire to have the Wilkins garage do Father," I said; "it's priceless! If he's put you in a position to squeeze him, why, go ahead. It's all in the family."

"I got my honour to consider."

"Who's going to buy my hats?" I said.

"Nobody," said Jimmie.

So when he went out to buy some evening papers and things, I locked him out again.—That is, I put the chain on the door and peeked at him through the crack.

"I'm not going to let you in till you see the light," I said.

"Very well," said Jimmie, "I'll stay out all night. I've done it before."

"On the fire-escape?" I said.

"Not on your life," said Jimime; "I'll stay where I stayed before."

"Where was that?"

"At Angelica's," said Jimmie.

Well, I knew it was, all the time, only I wouldn't admit it. She'd get him there if she

could, of course. Why, the first time I ever saw her, she was halitosing down his collar. She's so crazy about him that she winces every time he pats the back of his own neck.

I don't blame her so much. But I thought I'd married an angel, straight down out of heaven. I guess I did—a fallen angel, one of the Lucifer gang.

How do people bear such things? That's what I want to know.

II

CAROL, she's left me. I guess it was coming to me. In marriage, like everything else, you got to have confidence in the person you are doing business with.

Some years ago, somebody came to see me about Tom Healy. It was the year he was married, and I was considerable younger and didn't know him so well. But when this feller told me a whole long mess about Tom's making free with money that didn't belong to him, and getting fired for it, I just says:

"Crazy people ain't accountable," I says, "but Tom Healy in his right mind never done nothing dishonourable."

Of course, the facts was proved in short order, but Tom wouldn't have been my friend if I couldn't have responded in just that way before I knew anything at all about it. Friendship is a lodge that either you are a member of in good and regular standing, or you ain't elected. With

lodge members the burden of proof rests outside, on somebody else's shoulders. You and your friend has your shoulders together. If marriage ain't a friendship that's cemented with truth and honesty, then what is it?

A wife that don't *know,* after you've give her yourself, soul and body and tender, private thoughts and everything you got in the world, no matter how you dreamed you could use it for bettering yourself, why, she's a wife, as the novels say, in name only. She can't lay no claim to real womanhood. It's good riddance to bad rubbish if a wife like that leaves you, for the sooner you know that there ain't no real foundation to your marriage—the better.

I suppose Carol thought I couldn't stand any temptations (not that Angelica isn't as fine a woman as my own mother, or ever thought of me as anything but a brother, neighbour, and friend, that could be called upon to protect her in a time of need) because—and I suppose this is the point—I couldn't stand being tempted by her in the beginning.

"The woman tempted me, and I did eat," but

I got my victual license first, I'd like to remind her.

Then there's a great difference in women. Some of them has a kind of veil over their little tricks and ways, that makes you slow to imagine that anything personal might come of it all, like a light with a lamp-shade over it; but Carol is in the live-wire class, and if you take hold of a live wire, you get shot full of bolts—the trick being not to take hold, of course.

If Angelica was another kind of girl, for instance, I could see how Carol could misunderstand the situation somewhat—that is, if she didn't have no confidence in the man that had took the marriage vow with her at the altar within the month—but Angelica being the pure-souled, innocent-minded woman she is, I don't see how anybody could misapprehend the high standard of her moral outlook. Why, once before I ever met Carol, I put my arm around her kind of affectionate, and she removed it with a look that showed me I had hurt her feelings by not realizing that such a thing was far from her thoughts. She ain't never been kissed much,

either. I found that out the night I took her to Tom Healy's and they had the mistletoe.

It did kind of flash across my mind at the time that she might improve with a few lessons, but I ain't never thought of it from that day to this. Not in particular, no more than I've thought of a half a dozen other girls I knew.

What Carol don't know about men is that marriage opens their eyes several ways, and for some it makes it advisable to wear blinders. The experiences I had before I was married I took light. I found out some things I wanted to know and salted down the fact that ignorance wasn't always bliss nor *vice versa.* I looked forward to marriage as advisable and necessary, but a kind of unnatural way to put in your time. Instead of which it turned out to be the other way around. Comfortable or uncomfortable, it is the way things was meant to be—a man and a woman together, fixing things for each other, thinking about the food they are going to eat and the comfort they are going to take, and putting their heads down on each other's bosom, turn and turn about. "Man and woman created he them"—two halves to a whole. The

man that first called his wife his better half hadn't made a joke—he had discovered something pretty terrible. Carol may have turned out poor stuff, but she was my better half, all right.

But a man ain't a woman. He's more responsible, but not so single-hearted. A woman, she gets her curiosity satisfied and it holds her for a while. Her spiritual nature wraps itself around what she's got, if she's got what she wants, and takes it out in bedevilling the whole situation. A man, on the other hand, can't help but think, even if he's married to the Queen of Sheba, that marriage might have worked out pretty well with some of the other queens—some of the more light-complexioned ones, maybe. There's nothing to worry about in a man having these sly ideas, because the happier a woman makes him, the more he has them, and the less they amount to. It's his nature. But all I mean to say is that it's a pretty poor idea to leave a man in the lurch, a man that's been shot to pieces with happiness. If his mad was up enough, he might be agreeable to letting the pieces be picked up by somebody with a more soothing touch.

Loving Carol is hard work. Maybe I'll look for a job with shorter hours and more pay—it's what she's working to bring on to herself.

Well, the fat's in the fire now and it's the devil's work how it got there. I ain't stopped sweating yet, or stopped swearing either; swearing at women and the way they get notions to do or not to do things. Women don't have no motives for nothing. They just work on a set of crazy wires, that don't bear no relation to any other machinery in the world,—Angelica like all the rest of them.

I went out to get me a cup of coffee and a dish of *spaghetti* around on the Avenue. I left my door on the latch because I haven't got nothing now for nobody to get away from me. My valuable has been stole. When I come in, there was Angelica, answering my telephone, talking to Carol.

She said she heard it ringing and thought it might be important, but, good Lord, she knows how things is. She might have figured out that her being found in the flat was as good evidence as could be wanted by a jealous woman. But

When I come in, there was Angelica, answering my telephone, talking to Carol

no, she never thought of nothing. She heard the telephone and in she come to answer it. And then when she finds who it is, she goes right on gassing to beat the band and making matters worse.

"He's right here," she says as I come in. "I know he will want to speak to you."

The telephone hissed and spit in her ear.

"Tell her you just come in," I says.

"He's just come in."

The telephone took that hard, too.

"No, no," I says, "tell her how it was."

"If there is anything I can get for you," Angelica says, "I'll be awfully glad to do it. I'll pack very neatly and not crush anything."

"Leave me have the receiver," I says.

"Oh, no trouble at all. I'll be glad to," she cooes.

I grabbed the telephone.

"Carol," I says, "Angelica hasn't been here before. She just come in. Whatever you believe or you don't believe about us, you must——"

"Number, please."

"I was talking to a number," I says.

"Your party hung up."

"Well, now you've done it," I said to Angelica, after me and the operator had cussed back and forth for a while; she claiming that there was no such number as the one I give her for the Rich flat, and if there was, it was out of order.

"What have I done?" Angelica says.

"Well, it wasn't your fault," I says, "but you've give Carol the impression that——" Here I stuck.

"I'm sorry," she says, kind of piteous. "You know, Jimmie, I'd do anything in the world for your happiness."

"I know you would," I says. I didn't know it till she told me.

"Anything at all," she says, and begins to cry.

She leaned against me, and my arms just went round her automatic, and then—big fool—I found myself kissing her all over her face.

12

FATHER'S apartment has taken on all the festivity of an undertaker's parlour.

There is even a cheerful smell of embalming fluid about it. They say it's a new kind of polish for the brasses, but I know better. It's what you give a corpse to keep it contented after the climax of life's fitful fever. I never realized before what a dehydrated dump Jimmie married me out of. It's a break between a Waldorf ballroom and a railroad lunch-room, retaining the best features of both. I haven't even got my own things in it any more. I moved all my personal belongings to that bower where Angelica is now presumably taking her co-respondence course. I hope she tries all the brunette beautifiers. They'll look so rampant on her flour-like skin. She'll wear her rouge with a difference, all right.

The reason I think she is there is that I know she is!

She answered the telephone when I tried to get Jimmie. In my right mind, I would never have telephoned, but I am far from a well woman, mentally. In fact in another few hours I expect the alienists will be called in. I know I'm crazy, because everything else seems so stark, staring mad. Every thought I have is like a neuralgic pain hitting the high spots of my spiritual anatomy, that screaming my head off wouldn't begin to assuage any. So what wonder I developed an acute attack of telephone disease —the symptoms being the itching of the receiver hand, and the irresistible desire to get my lips to the mouthpiece and screech? For twenty-four hours after leaving my happy home I resisted that impulse; then I hurled myself at the instrument, prepared to do anything to stop my suffering, even to begging Jimmie to take me on as an extra concubine.

Well, the sweet voice that answered me over the phone was that of the albino herself, seemingly established already among the funeral baked meats—the Lares and Penates of my erstwhile ærie. I guess she's going to do her nesting while the nesting is good. If Jimmie wants an

addled egg like that scratching among the straws, instead of his hard-boiled little Carol, why not leave him have it? My slogan is Live and let live, and the devil take the hindmost, with my blessing.

But, some way, I can't. Even as the old pain hits me in the eye, that which I call my brain begins to work. It doesn't do away with the fact that Jimmie has let me down, or that if he had anything to explain he would come here and explain it, but it makes me feel that there is a nigger somewhere in that albino wood-pile.

I guess the reason I feel so is that, if things were the way I think they were, there wouldn't be any world. It would have fizzed up in smoke long ago. The reason I fell for Jimmie was because he was there, and nothing else ever was. Every other shoulder I ever put my head on was stuffed with straw—mouldy straw—and couldn't support me in the style to which I wanted to be accustomed, but the first time I ever leaned up against Jimmie, I knew that the Rock of Gibraltar was a sand-dune in comparison. Now, if Jimmie isn't there, how come I'm here at all? How come I woke up to break-

fast this morning? How come there was any breakfast to wake up to?

Well, however I think and think and think and chase my tail, I can't get past the fact that it's all over. Jimmie stayed all night in the creature's apartment. He told me so himself. And she offered to do up my things and send them to me in a suit-case. I certainly put the telephone instrument out of commission. They can tell that to the alienists. No one could have done a better job banging up an innocent instrument with nothing but a couple of fists and an ash receiver!—

I decided to arrange my future with Reginald before I tackled Father about the divorce. Pa has been quite non-committal about my coming home. His idea seems to be that Jimmie did well to stand me that long. If he loses his chauffeur through any unreasonableness of mine and I break out in a new place, he is going to turn nasty. Until then, his policy is peace at any price, or he'll know the reason why. Meantime he seems to have bought out all of the Wilkins garage and be running it himself. I told

him Jimmie wouldn't take it as a gift and he asked me why. So I guess he looked into the matter—which was pretty darn cute of him, if you ask me.—

In re Reginald, I had a kind of mixed feeling that if Jimmie had so nearly proved my salvation, by almost being what I thought he was, maybe I could lean gently on Reginald. I thought that maybe the startling novelty of having a husband had blinded me to the fact that they were all alike, in the essentials, and that Reginald's ideals might turn out to be Jimmie's, with the addition of a high hat and a monocle. Getting myself mistaken is apparently one of the things I do, and yet Reginald is a good lad and pretty gol durn attractive, in a technical way of speaking.

"My husband has gone off with a handsomer girl," I said; "so now's your chance to do your worst and make it snappy."

So we had lunch and dinner and supper together every day, night and morning for several of them, and our intimacy added several cubits to its stature in a very short time.

"Papa love Mamma?" I asked him one day,

when I judged that all the impressions I wanted him to get had sunk in.

"You bet," he said, panting a little, for I had let him take a couple of long, slow pulls at the old lip-stick—his first since my marriage—and they had sort of gone to his head.

"Well, Mamma will get her divorce then," I said, "and we'll be married."

"We'll be married," he said, "and while it lasts, we'll have a great time. But we don't have to think of that, do we?"

"Don't we?" I said.

"Or do you want to be married?" he said. "You know, I'm agreeable either way. But if you've had enough of it——"

"I haven't had enough of it," I said.

"Don't misunderstand me. I believe in doing what a girl wants. It's all an experiment anyway. But I thought your recent experiences might have prejudiced you against getting tied up."

"Damaged goods?" I said.

"Goods are all damaged nowadays," he said, "Don't be old-fashioned. I'll make an honest woman of you, if you want."—

"Don't you believe it could last, Reggie, and be sweet all the way along?"—

"Have you ever seen it?"

"No—o," I said, "but I'd like to. If you could only trot out one little rag of an ideal about now, Reginald——"

He got out his flask.

"Have a drink, Baby," he said; "you'll feel better. Then I want to quench my thirst too. I always like my gin mixed with a little fizz, like a kiss or something."

"Do you love me, Reggie?"

"Sure I do. That's what all the shooting is for.—Now, more."

"Two a day is all you get," I said, "until I think over your proposition."

"But you proposed to me fair and square," he said; "what is there to think over?"

"I have to decide whether I meant it or not."

"Well, I mean it," he said.

Which is all right in its way, but not so good if you happen to be looking for a substitute for Jimmie—who is a man.

I guess I'll get my divorce and get me to a nunnery. I didn't get any more kick out of

Reginald's kisses—which I had been looking forward to, ever since I lit the match under the flame that set them simmering. I guess I'll go and wash my mouth out with soap-suds and pray to God to strike Angelica dead before I wend my way to the Model Tenements and choke her with her own lemon-coloured hair.

If Jimmie had asked me in the beginning, not to be married, but to just go ahead, I would have. Now I've gone and got so moral I don't even like illicit kisses. What's the answer to the mess?

What's the answer?

13

IF there is anything in this world dumber than a man, I guess it's a woman. I ain't throwing myself no bouquet of violets, either, for if there has a word been invented to describe the kind of fool I think I am, I ain't never heard it. I could spend the rest of my life cussing, and not make much headway on the job of expressing myself. I've thought all along that even if Carol hadn't married her equal in society, she'd got a he-man that was strong enough to protect her in every way she required. I've thought that an ignoramus that knew how to respect a woman was better than a boy doll with his veins full of water, that could say "Mama" in French. But there ain't no advantage to Carol in having married a man that's weak as well as ignorant. Being uneducated is a handicap that you got to make up for by having something to offset it. As far as I can see, I ain't got nothing but my looks, as Carol says.

And I'd improve them if I got my nose broke a couple more times.

If I had been any part of a gentleman, I know what I should of done. I should of got over my mad and gone after that little spitting cat of a wife of mine and held her by the neck till she stopped scratching and biting. I should of owned up all my deficiencies and explained matters and then let her take it or leave it as she saw fit. I've acted just as childish as she has, and that's a fact.

But the way I'm situated now, I can't hardly do that. Angelica, she suffered in secret, she says, till she couldn't bear it no more. My marriage cut pretty deep. Up to that time she had hopes things might be different, but after that she went all to pieces, and that accounts for the way she's acting now; one minute having hysterics all over the place and the next thing so sick she can't lift her head. I pity her from the bottom of my heart, and if there was anything I could do to make her feel better, short of repeating a mistake that never ought to have happened, God knows I would do it.

My experience with women has never led me

to expect anything of this kind. Carol, she's a kitten, with the same craving for attention and petting that a kitten has, but also the same way of arching her back and going to play by herself. Sometimes I'm ungentlemanly enough to think that Angelica is like a sick cat, and that what you do to sick cats is to chloroform them. But I suppose that is because I am so healthy myself I don't hardly know what to do about all this meowing and shedding tears.

I used to think that Angelica was a mountain of strength and womanly traits, instead of which she turns out to be a die-away, cringing creature that wants to go over and over one thing all the time. She won't stay in her own flat because, she says, she's so lonesome, and when I try to explain to her how bad it looks for her to keep lying around mine, it makes her feel worse again. Well, I've got all over that feeling I had that if being married to one woman was good, being married to several more that you could think of might be better. My fingers is crossed from now on.

I never wanted to really settle down to love Carol, because I knew it was going to hurt con-

siderable if she really got me in her power—our stations being so different and the road beset with so many difficulties. I've admitted she was my girl, but I guess I ain't never got my teeth into the fact she was my woman, for ever amen. It seems ridiculous on the face of it that my whole happiness could hang on the whims of a funny little child, that ain't got her roots down into nothing—but me—and wants to spend all her time pulling them up and watching them grow. But I guess it's so, all righty, though it's time I stopped philosophizing and tried to get hold of my problem from a different angle, somehow. I read somewhere once that the only time a man can give his whole attention to one woman was when he was mixed up with another. Men ain't much, when you come to think of it.

My father-in-law has been a big surprise.

The first day after Carol quit, I told him I was leaving my employment, and he says:

"Like hell you are," and ordered the car for ten o'clock the next morning.

I tried to put it up to him that it was a kind of embarrassing situation for me, but he made it

clear that he had trouble enough without losing his chauffeur, too, and I couldn't help but see his point. Of course Carol, she's riding in taxis, if she rides.

Later I took up the situation with him.

"Mr. Rich," I says, "as man to man, I would like to make a clean breast of how things stand, if you will permit me, sir," I says.

"Suppose I'll have to," he says. "Talk isn't much in my line, but I'd rather it would be you than her."—

"I married your daughter," I says, "because——"

"She threw you and roped you before you had a chance."

"She was very desirous of the match, sir, at the time."

"Well, why couldn't you keep her in that state of mind for a few months?"

"It got to be kind of a struggle," I says, "as to who would be the boss."

"And why didn't you settle it?"

"I would have, sir," I says, "when I got my bearings. I'd settle it now, but other complications has arisen."—

"You mean that Sawyer feller? She's figuring to spring it on me to buy her a divorce, so's she can marry him. Did you know it?"—

"No, sir," I says.

"Well, why don't you stop it? If you want her. I don't blame you, either way. Carol's like her mother, and God knows I gave up trying to handle her."

"She's like her father, too," I says, and that pleased him.

"I bought a Wilkins partnership for you, and she said you wouldn't take it because the shop was run crooked."

"It is," I says.—

"Well, how about your taking over the whole outfit?"—

"I'd do that."—

"Well, take it. I bought it out. I did it for my own satisfaction. I want a place to keep my car where they won't have the hide off me.—Carol was brought up wrong—never having a mother's influence. She's spoiled, but I guess you can make something of her—if you want to."

"I don't know that I would ever overcome

the difference in our stations," I said; "I haven't had no advantages—being raised in the country."

"You'd take polish," he says; "I did." Which I almost had to laugh at.—

"Then," I says, "there is those complications I spoke of. I would take Carol by the ear and bring her home, except that——"

"A woman?" he says.

"That I can't get out of the flat. She was the one that Carol got so jealous of she left. And she didn't have no reason to, then," I says.

"The more fool she."

"I could explain a little further, sir," I says, but the way he looked at me, I changed my mind, and offered him back his garage.

"You better make me a profit on that," he says, "to pay for the divorce."

And so he kind of washed his hands of the whole matter. I s'pose he was thinking that most fools ain't fools enough to be honest, but being so makes them all the more tiring.

I went over the whole ground with Tom Healy to-night after having gone to the drug-

store and got Angelica some bromide and cooked her a dinner, which I made her understand she would have to eat off a tray in her own flat.

Tom may be led around by the nose by his wife talking poetry to him, but he learns by what happens to him, and has got a pretty clear outlook on the way women is made up. It ain't always the man that can manage his womenfolks that knows the most about them, but quite the contrary. Having the courage of your convictions is another thing. If Tom had my nerve and I had his knowledge, you couldn't beat us.

"I don't want to be a murderer," I says. "A girl like Angelica's pretty high-strung. I don't know what she's going to do next—go into a high fever or jump out of the window. I'm pretty well wrought up," I says.

"Don't get it into your head that their bite is worse than their bark," Tom says. No matter how serious a situation is, Tom is always comical —to me.

"I'm afraid she'll choke," I says, "when she throws back her head and hollers to hell."—

"Women is poor losers. She seemed like a nice girl, the times I met her."

"She is.—Refined and quiet appearing. I used to think she would be easier to get along with than Carol, for instance."

"I don't know so much about these racing machines."

"Well, I guess that's my trouble. I'm used to the old-fashioned chassis—the weight of a car that's down close to the ground. Carol's built for speed and class."

"You don't want to lose her?"

"Hell," I says, "I'm lost myself if I do."

"Then the thing to do is to get Angelica out, and to get her in."

"Which is about like the job the cannibal chief had, of eating up all the tough old girls his wife was jealous of."

"I don't want you to make no mistake," Tom says. "I'm a married man myself and I know what it is to get the right one. Carol, she seemed to belong to a kind of fast lot."

"She's fast, but not loose," I says. "She's my wife, and I want her. In fact," I says, "I'm done for if I don't get her."

"Well, if that's the case——" Tom says.

14

I'M ashamed of myself in a new direction. I knew I was a miserable failure as a maid, wife, or widow, but I thought as a daughter I comported myself admirably, considering my handicaps—my handicaps being a father that gave me everything I wanted, and asked no questions for fear of getting involved in an argument. I've certainly got a genius for assuming that the other person is a one half of one per cent moron, and that I am the all-wise grandmother of the human race. The more insignificant the ego, the more it struts and stretches and waves and wags its tail. The poor little pin-head that is me has certainly been making a holy show of itself, or would have been if anybody had had a powerful microscope.

Since the coffee we have at home tastes like a combination of stagnant fish-pond and indelible writing-fluid, I've been getting up to breakfast—to perk his morning dose for Father in the prehistoric percolator that she who was my mother—God forbid—once wished upon the

household. It has been a very festive meal—Father showing signs of less than anthropological intelligence, and me steadily dripping tears into the napkin behind my newspaper.

"You needn't think," says Pa this morning, startling me into dropping my roll butter-side down upon the only négligy in the house, "that I'm going to get you a divorce from Jakes, to marry that cake-eating dude you have around here. Jakes may be a fool, but he's an honest, decent feller."

"He isn't a fool," I said, "and he isn't a decent, honest feller."

"Well, you're a fool," Pa said—"fool to leave him."

"He had a woman," I said.

"Not till you quit him."

"How do you know?" I said, as calmly as if the whole world wasn't revolving about his answer.

"He told me. Now he can't get rid of her."

"Well, Jimmie doesn't lie," I said.

"Not to *me*," said Father, as if lying to me might be any intelligent man's avocation.

"That being the case," I said thoughtfully, "I

feel that you are about to lose a daughter and gain a chauffeur once again. You'll be sorry when I'm not around to make your morning coffee." I patted the percolator in my exuberance.

"That contraption is going to be thrown out the window the minute you leave."

"Nevertheless and notwithstanding, you are going to get kissed for this morning's work. Daddy, you're the best little old sleuther that ever sleuthed," and I made several lunges at him, scattering kisses all over his bald spot. I wish I'd known before that it could be done. I guess you can either kiss or tip anybody in the world, if you only know it.

Then I called up the garage and ordered the car, Jimmie and all, and proceeded, while humming to myself that scriptural passage about the bridegroom being so sweet, to make a toilet in the original wedding-garments, first designed for City Hall.

When the car was announced, I went sailing into it without a glance in the driver's direction, making a great fuss to the hall boy in my wake about the proper disposition of my suit-case, and

settling myself in the back seat, with an air of the most offensive nonchalance. Nothing happened for several minutes. Then Jimmie turned around and looked at me and I looked at him.

"Where to, miss?" he said.

"Home, James.—I'm going to get my things," I added hastily, "taking an empty suit-case that I can bring back full."

"All righty," said Jimmie, but half-way through the Park he stopped.

I don't know whether it was accident or not that we were right in the heart of our old parking-ground—the first place I succeeded in getting him to show signs of life.

"The flat is being cleaned," he said; "it won't do to take you there. Carol, I wish you'd come over into the front seat."

"Well, in that case," I said, "I'll go up alone. You wait in the car ten minutes, and then come up for me."

"You mustn't do that," said Jimmie; "Carol, if you would come over on the front seat, I could explain."

"I won't," I said. "You don't need to explain.

Didn't I get her on the telephone the first day I left you?"

"She—she only goes in there to rest," said Jimmie, sweating, "Her own flat makes her so nervous now."

"I should think it would," I said.

"You get out of my house," I said to Angelica, as she rose languidly from the day-bed to greet me.

But the poor old remnant was entirely shot, and the only way she could respond was with a flood of tears.

"Well, tell me all about it, then," I said.

"It's me he loves, not you," she said.

"Has he told you so?"

"He has more than told me so."

"So you think he ought to divorce me and marry you—that's about the size of it—and make an honest woman of you?"

"I am an honest woman," sighed Angelica. I shook the creature by the shoulder.

"Tell me what you mean," I said, "or I'll choke the life out of you. How far has this thing gone?"

Home, James

"As far as—Not so far as—He—Jimmie—I—I——"

"You mean that in his rage and disgust at my throwing him over he nearly bit the ear off you?" I said, glorying in my coarseness.

"Ye-es," said Angelica, "but I mean—I mean—a man doesn't make love to a woman like that—unless—unless——"

"You know so much about men!" I said, "I don't wonder you're all gone to pieces. You're a poor thing," and then I even patted her and put my arm around her. "You are just like my father—you need a little human affection, and nobody has ever realized it."

On the new deluge sprung by this remark Jimmie made his opportune appearance.

"Angelica wants you to take her back to her apartment," I said, and then, noticing the look of loathing and contempt he couldn't refrain from casting upon her, I added: "Pick her up and carry her. She's too weak to walk."

And that was that. Little did I realize, when that elegant specimen of defective pigmentation first entered my life, that one little volume on *What A Gentlewoman In Reduced Circum-*

stances Ought To Know would have saved my matrimonial craft from the rocks that almost wrecked it.

The first thing Jimmie wanted to do, when he came back from depositing his fragile burden in whatever virginal envelope was waiting to receive it—and it was as quick as he could make it—was to take me in his arms. But my idea was to let them air a bit first—to get the stench of stale straw out of his nostrils.

"A nice girl," I said, "but crazy."

"Which—her or you?"

"Both," I said modestly, "but I'm crazy because I'm pressed down and running over with good material that I don't know how to handle, and she's crazy because she hasn't got any stuff. Savvy?"

"You're dead right—about her."

"I'm dead right about me."

"You're crazy because nobody has ever took you across his knee and spanked you," said Jimmie, making some preparations.

"I'd like to see anybody try it," I said.

Practically all the furniture was wrecked before the fell deed was accomplished. I meant

to let him do it, but I played perfectly fair and put up the stiffest fight I could manage. I could see all the cruel, tired lines smoothing out of his darling face with every wallop—that is, I could have seen them if it had been physically possible.

"Don't say that about a woman, a dog, and a walnut tree, Jimmie," I panted. "Let me up. Your knees have grown thin, and so has my chest-bone."

"It isn't nothing more than a joke to you, after all," he said, when he got me set up right end foremost again.

"You can look in my eyes," I said; then I added irrelevantly: "Jimmie, Jimmie, Jimmie, Jimmie, Jimmie, Jimmie!"

"How about that Sawyer feller?"

"He had just exactly two three-minute kisses," I said, "and then they weren't altogether hard-boiled. Oh, yes, I'm engaged to be married to him later, but not till you've led Angelica to the altar."

"I'd like to wring his G. D. neck for him."

"But I did it all," I said.

"You don't have to tell *me*," said Jimmie.

I hastily changed the subject.

"How soon do I get kissed by you?" I inquired.

"That was what I was trying to make up my mind. You don't get kissed at all unless you come to my terms. I'm going to have a wife, or I ain't going to have a wife."

"Which do you think it is going to be?"

"I don't think. I know," he said.

And I knew, too. Even before he proceeded to lay down the law to me, I was calling on my maker to protect me from the deep, unfathomable chasm into which I was falling—the chasm of a lifelong devotion to one unworthy object. My relation with anybody else in the world has always ended in my hitting a blank wall, but when I find myself running down the black, black path to Jimmie, there is light at the end of it—light and safety and peace. He's my man, that's what he is, and nothing else in heaven or earth makes the slightest bit of difference.

Well, I'll try to take it out of him for that, but my guess is that from now on my efforts are going to be sort of puerile.

15

I SUPPOSE I shall have to get some age on me before I can get to be philosophical about the difference between the two sexes. The way I figure it out now, one sex is nothing but a lump of putty in the hands of the other one, and I keep changing my mind as to which sex it is.

The way things look now, I got Carol where I want her. I've chalked down the mark where she's going to set her toes, and she has set 'em there. But on the other hand, I was the poor fish that was floundering around in a sea of trouble that I couldn't see no way out of but jumping into the East River, and Carol, she just give the situation one look and told Angelica where to get off. And Angelica got.

It would be ungentlemanly for me to show, even to Carol, how tickled I was with the way it all come out. Angelica is a good girl, and deserves something better than to get hysterical over a married man. And here's Carol, about

half her size and age and weight, taking a real, motherly interest in her and instructing her in the ways of the world; telling her just what men is and isn't, and by Gum, with a mother's eye out to find another one for her.

The other day she began fishing around to discover what had become of Sam Einstein, since Tom Healy's sister-in-law wasn't going with him any more. I didn't let on that I knew what she was after, but I went out on the balcony and had a laugh all to myself. I know this much: if the positions was reversed, Angelica wouldn't be trying to do no good turn to Carol, but quite the contrary. I'll learn a little something about women some day, but by that time they'll get a whole new set of ways to act, and throw out all my calculations.

Carol, she thinks that all we've got to do now is to settle down in the tenement and be happy loving each other. She thinks because she's going to have her hair cut on Forty-second Street instead of the Ritz, and make curtains out of shiny cretonne instead of gingham, that all our problems is going to be solved. But me and my pipe have got to do a little bit of figuring

yet. I'm just waiting for a day when Carol has some pressing engagement to take her out to lunch, so's I can get one of those old cars out of the store-room down town and pull it to pieces. When I get the insides of an engine all laid out before me and the job of getting it together again in a given time, my mind seems to work freely on other things. I kind of get into the swing of thinking, and my ideas smooth themselves out to my tinkering.

Not that Carol and I haven't come to an understanding, for we have. The day she come back and drove Angelica out, we had a long talk before I even so much as kissed her once, although I had to get her across my knees and give her a spanking, in order not to go down on them to her and beg her to forgive me for the kind of fool I had been making of myself. I had just sense enough to know that I ought to do the dictating. If she hadn't done some stalling in the beginning, I might not have been able to carry it out, but, thank God, a woman almost always takes to womaning, as I call it, whenever a man needs to gain a little time. A man would be lost, oftentimes, if he didn't have

a chance to get his bearings while a woman was holding him off.

Well, after we had cleared the air with our fooling that morning, I set her up on my knee and I says: "Either I'm going to have a wife on my terms or I ain't going to have a wife," and then I told her the principle things that was in the way of our getting on together.

"What I've been thinking is," I says, "that marriage is two characters coming together and being welded into one, or it ain't nothing. People that has just got their minds on living their own lives ought to live them," I says, "without anybody else. You can't eat your cake and have it too," I says, "and it ain't cake after you've eat it. It's a part of your blood and bones and marrow—what you live on and what you are hankering after. If you can't give up single life for marriage, then you ought not to be married," I says. "You either got to be your pa's daughter or your husband's wife," I says; "you and I have either got to make our lives and our friends together, or you got to go back to your own set and all their fast ways. Now, which is it going to be?" I says.

Carol, she was listening all right, but she couldn't altogether bear my putting things so clear and concise. She flung herself at me and kissed me, so little and tired and breathless and panting that I didn't hold out against her.

"Why, James Valentino Jakes," she says, between kisses and sobs, "I took you down to City Hall and married you myself. Nothing could have been legaller. Anybody would think you had some choice in the matter."

"No, they wouldn't," I says, "but maybe I've come to my senses at last."

"I hope not," she says.

"Carol," I says, "do you love me?"

She began to quiver and quake and grow serious.

"Don't ask me that," she said.

I knew what she meant, because I wouldn't have wanted her to ask me that, either—after all the times we've said it to each other.

"Well, I'll put it a little different," I says; "do you like being married to me enough to want to make it work out?"

"On mature consideration, I do," says Carol. "Kiss me."

I done so.

"Well," I says, "are you willing to try to live on what your husband makes?"

"No," says Carol, "but I will. Then if it doesn't work, I'll get a business allowance from Father and live strictly within it."

"The Wilkins garage may not keep you in—hairpins," I says.

("Joke," says Carol, feeling her bob.)

"But you've got to give it a chance."

"I will, I will, I will," says Carol. "Anything else?"

"We got to try and build," I says, "build for a future."

"I'll build," says Carol, "if you'll hold me a little tighter in your arms. I can't think while I'm all rattling round so."

"I want you should spare me time to go to night school," I says, "to get myself educated. Your father says I'll take polish—he did."—We laid off to laugh at him for a while. "Then, after that," I resumed, "I'd like to take what capital I can get out of the Wilkins garage, paying your father what he put in, of course, and go to live in the country, where we can make

some new friends and live a kind of a simple life among nice people that ain't so fast and loose as your friends, nor so lacking in ambition and refinement as my acquaintances—not that Tom Healy isn't a prince of a feller," I says, "but he's the only friend I've got that I consider worthy of the name," I says.

"You're thinking of the kiddies," said Carol.

"Ain't you?" I said.

"Well, yes and no. I'd be glad to have little Jimmie brought up in the country among the trees and hop-toads, but the baby Angelica, with her delicate complexion, might flourish better if she got her violet rays filtered through New York air."

"How about the twins, Reggie and Ackey?" I says.

"They'll be having all the children's diseases in any environment. We don't have to consider them. The number of our children is going to be limited, unless you let Father pay for their education, Jimmie."

"Well, that seems fair," I says.

"We're going to bring a little humanity into Grandpa's life, you know. He's just mummi-

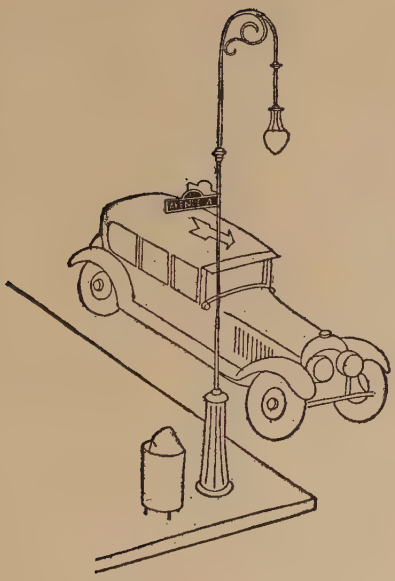
fied from having had a rotten wife and a wild woman for a daughter. But we'll make it up to him as time goes on, with judicious and diplomatic handling. It's terrible how responsible women are, Jimmie. If my mother hadn't hennaed her hair and left me in my cradle, I might not have tried to raise so much pink hell with you and all my other boy friends. Do you know the thing that I like best of all the things —*all* the things that there are, Jimmie, between us?"

"I can't say as I do," I says.

"It's the way that you have of mothering me," says my little brown wife.

Which, when you come to think of it, is how it ought to be. But I kind of laughed in my sleeve to think that if she'd put the same question to me, I could of answered the same way.

"The way you have of mothering me," I should of said. And meant it too, all righty.



A NOTE ON THE TYPE IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

This book is set on the Linotype in Garamond, a modern rendering of the type first cut in the sixteenth century by Claude Garamond (1510–1561). He was a pupil of Geofroy Tory and is believed to have based his letters on the Venetian models although he introduced a number of important differences, and it is to him we owe the letter which we know as Old Style. He gave to his letters a certain elegance and a feeling of movement which won for their creator an immediate reputation and the patronage of the French King, Francis I.

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